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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 NICOSIA 000379

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TAGS: PREL PGOV TU CY

SUBJECT: CYPRUS: PRESIDENT CHRISTOFIAS BELIEVES TALAT UNDER  
TURKISH "DEEP STATE" PRESSURE

REF: A. NICOSIA 00050

1B. PANICO-FITZPATRICK JUNE 11 E-MAIL

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Classified By: Ambassador Frank C. Urbancic for reasons 1.4(b)  
and 1.4(d)

1.(C) Summary: "I believe Talat desires a federation, but the positions he puts on the table are confederal", President Demetris Christofias complained to the Ambassador during a 50-minute meeting on June 10. Christofias blamed the Turkish "deep state" and military--not Turkish Cypriot (T/C) leader Mehmet Ali Talat or Turkey's political leadership--for the hardline. He ticked off a list of T/C positions that, he charged, betrayed confederal, two-state tendencies. He added that while he remained committed to achieving a solution, his own ability to compromise was limited because he needed something "better than Annan", including the return of the Karpas peninsula and a favorable property regime, to get a deal that could pass a G/C referendum. In an oft-heard refrain, he sought USG pressure to moderate Turkish/Turkish Cypriot bargaining positions. He also voiced a strong desire to build upon US-Cypriot bilateral relations, and said he hoped to make an official visit to Washington to meet POTUS and the Secretary. Christofias, while rejecting timetables and deadlines, accepted that there is a "natural calendar" (Turkey's December 2009 EU Accession review and Talat's reelection battle against anti-solution nationalists in April 2010), but said those dates put pressure on Turkey and Talat, not him. Regarding opening the Limnitis/Yesilirmak crossing point, he hoped that the Turkish Cypriots would drop their demand to transport fuel to the T/C enclave of Kokkina. Domestically, he welcomed the June 6 EP elections as a vote of confidence for his pro-solution efforts. For his part, the Ambassador praised the leaders for their progress to date and said the USG stood ready to assist and would encourage all, including Ankara, to show flexibility and the will to compromise. End Summary.

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"I don't blame Talat"

12. (C) Christofias blamed "circles" in Turkey for what he dubbed the "confederal" demands of the Turkish Cypriots. "I don't blame Talat," he said, adding that he did not doubt Talat's sincere belief in a bizonal, bicommunal federation, and even exonerated Turkey's "political" leadership. Culpability lay squarely with a triumvirate of forces--the Turkish "deep state", the military, and the National Security

Council--that blocked transforming the unitary RoC into a genuine federation for all Cypriots, whether Greek or Turkish. Ostensibly Turkish Cypriot demands, e.g. communal voting vice a single presidential ticket and strong representation in federal bodies (including numerical equality in some instances), were, he hinted, dictates from Ankara. Unlike Talat, he assured the Ambassador that he was his own man, enjoying the full support of Greek PM Constantine Karamanlis.

¶3. (C) Excessive T/C demands would hinder the "functionality" and "viability" of the new federal republic--G/C code for disproportionate T/C representation in federal bodies. Christofias noted that although former President Makarios had agreed to a federation to "pay for the sins of the Greek Junta and its Cypriot henchmen", he could not now "injure the rights of the majority for the minority." However, he admitted, without expounding, that he and Talat had indeed achieved important convergences, including on the judiciary and the economy.

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"Need something better than Annan"  
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¶4. (C) Christofias stated that he "needed something better than Annan" to convince suspicious Greek Cypriots to vote "yes." He said the key lay in a favorable property regime and generous territorial give backs, including the Karpas peninsula. He called property "the soul of the capitalist system", and said he could not support a property scheme that allowed an independent board to decide the fate of legal G/C owners whose property would remain in the T/C constituent state. (Note: As in the Annan Plan, the Turkish Cypriots

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favor an independent property board that, operating on mutually-agreed principles, would adjudicate claims based on return, exchange, or compensation. End Note). Rather, he wanted all original owners to have the right of first refusal, noting that most Greek Cypriots would, in fact, choose not to return to abandoned property in the T/C constituent state.

¶5. (C) Christofias also To/k issue with thed, sought majority Turkish Cypriot population and property ownership in thear tituLar constituent state. He conceded majorIty T/C popudatimn, but noted the principle that Greek Cypriots should be able to live, work, and own ppo0erty anywhere on the island. In fact, h%argued, g)ven G/C business acumen, their presence could mn,y "enefit Turkish Cypriot economic development. He underqcored, however, that he uas "not dogm!tia" on prmperty and would not push for "lind adherence to the recent European Court o& Justice (ECJ)Q "Orams" property ruling.

¶6. (C) Christofias ho0ed dhat a desired increase in te2ritorial adjuQtmefts davoring Greek Cypriots above An.an Pl!n limIts wouLD make the property issue less acute amgng G/C3. "We will start from what tHe Afnan Plan prmvide\$,," he said, and then seek additional areas, including the return of the entire Karpas peninsula, to Greek Cypriot administration (Note: Under Annan, Karpas was to remain in the T/C constituent state, but limited provisions were to be enacted for local autonomy in cultural, religious, and educational affairs in certain traditionally G/C villages. End Note) He dismissed what he termed "Turkish security concerns" used to justify keeping Karpas. He acknowledged, however, that Talat was in a "tough position" regarding territory and thus faced "demolition" by the former T/C leader and ultra-hardliner Rauf Denktash were he now to publicly discuss maps or possible concessions. Christofias admitted, however, that the real discussion on territory would only be possible later in the process, during the give-and-take sessions, and not during the first reading on Territory, which commenced on June 11.

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"Convince Ankara..."  
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¶7. (C) Christofias asked the Ambassador to have the U.S. "convince Ankara" to adopt a more "reasonable position" that would allow the evolution of the unitary RoC into a "real federation." He said he would not try to "blackmail" Ankara, but noted that it would be "impossible" to give the green light to Turkish EU Accession if the "occupation" and "non-recognition" of Cyprus continue. He said that he had wanted to meet with PM Erdogan, even in secret and even in Turkey, but that Erdogan "couldn't accept it," fearing accusations of Turkish recognition of Cyprus. (Note: T/Cs and Turkey both are against direct Ankara-Nicosia contact. End Note.) The Ambassador responded that the USG regularly talks with Turkey, as it does with all interested parties, and urges the need for flexibility and compromise. He noted that Turkish FM Davutoglu said "all the right things," including using language from the Leaders' Joint Statements, during his recent meeting with the Secretary in Washington.

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...Because I will not save them  
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¶8. (C) Christofias dodged the Ambassador's question regarding the possibility of completing the first and second readings of the negotiation topics by the end of July. After citing the need for T/C territorial concessions, he switched tack, arguing that the "natural calendar," including Turkey's December 2009 EU Accession Review and Talat's April 2010 elections, are not his concern. "They are under pressure. Why should I be forced into concessions to save them?" he asked rhetorically. He believed that if a settlement were close, Turkey, with its large north Cyprus "settler" population, could certainly engineer the reelection of Mr. Talat, so Talat's alleged April 2010 deadline was, in fact, artificial. The Ambassador underscored the fact that all parties would need to make compromises so that the present process, a unique opportunity thanks to the genuine

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commitment of two pro-solution leaders, would result in success.

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Seeks Official Washington Visit  
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¶9. (C) Christofias told the Ambassador that he wanted to foster "closer contact" with the United States and thus had consigned the "Bush Presidency" to the past (i.e. USG support of the 2004 Annan Plan). He said he "valued" the role of the US in the P-5, although he later urged the USG to be "consistent" in voting on UNSC resolutions. He wanted to share "first-hand" his vision for a reunified island with POTUS, the Vice-President, and the Secretary through an official visit to Washington. (Note: American Hellenic Institute (AHI) Board members, who by chance met both the Ambassador and Christofias on the same day, said he made the same pitch concerning a US visit to them. End Note)

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Limnitis/Yesilirmak Crossing: "I will not be humiliated"  
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¶10. (C) Although the leaders announced on June 11 (through the UN) that they were "near" an agreement on opening the Limnitis crossing point (REF B), Christofias appeared to be at end of his wits about the matter just a day earlier. He told the Ambassador he had made concession after concession on Limnitis, including agreeing to provide electricity to the T/C enclave/military base at Kokkina, and would "not be humiliated" further. He said he hoped the T/Cs would pull

back their demand to move fuel to the enclave--one of the main sticking points--but was otherwise ready to "move forward." He also said that Talat had suggested earlier to resettle Kokkina with Turkish Cypriot civilians to provide cover for Christofias' allowing the shipment of the fullest possible range of non-lethal goods to the enclave. Christofias said he later "clashed" with Talat when Talat said that actual resettlement--if it were to happen at all--could only be conducted several years later. (Note: Ozdil Nami, T/C negotiator, told the Ambassador in a separate meeting that Christofias had misunderstood a rhetorical comment that Talat had made and that the T/Cs had no plans to resettle civilians in Kokkina. End Note)

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EP Election Results: "People Want a solution"  
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¶11. (C) Christofias told the Ambassador that the strong showing in June 6 EP elections by the two main pro-solution parties, the communist AKEL and the center-right DISY, proved that "people want a solution." He warned, however, that despite each party garnering nearly 35% of the vote, the election was not national and was marked by a low turn-out (about 60% versus an average of near 80%). He also acknowledged, though not by name, "internal opposition" in his own government by the solution-sceptical and faction riven DIKO. Later he added that he hoped party leaders who favored cooperation with him (FM Markos Kyprianou and House Speaker Markos Garoyan) would emerge victorious over anti-solution forces in the party (Nikos Papadopoulos).

¶12. (C) Comment: Optimistic and seemingly persuaded a deal can be reached, Christofias nevertheless does not recognize that Talat is constrained by, or represents, independent T/C opinion and interests. Rather, he is convinced that Turkey lurks behind all of Talat's positions at variance from his own. Christofias believes that the only way to convince his wary populace to vote "yes" is by presenting an agreement more appealing to G/Cs than the 2004 Annan Plan. He exaggerates the light between Talat and Ankara on core T/C existential issues such as Turkish guarantees, political equality, and the necessity for two strong constituent states. The dismay that gripped Christofias over the long impasse on opening Limnitis/Yesilirmak seems now close to passing. Presidential Leonides Pantalides asked Ambassador June 15 whether U.S. would be willing to use its AID funds to pay for the USD 6 million road paving to allow the buffer zone crossing at Limnitis/Yesilirmak. Though U.S. funds are insufficient, the question implies that Limnitis will be settled positively. It is also, clear, however, that

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Christofias and the G/Cs in general seriously underestimate the difficulties that lie ahead. The T/Cs will certainly be prepared to accept a final plan that is different from Annan, but they will not accept less; Christofias, however, seems convinced that Talat will back down. Downtime has his work cut out for him, this is for sure. Christofias was pleased at the Ambassador's initiative in seeking this meeting and asked to see him more frequently. We will take him up on that offer.  
End Comment.

Urbancic